

VZCZCXRO2153
PP RUEHTRO
DE RUEHAS #1350/01 2671048
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241048Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4509
INFO RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0257
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1308
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6053
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2355
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 1952
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 6804
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8635
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3073

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001350

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STATE FOR NEA, DS FOR DS/IP/NEA, DS/IP/ITA, DS/DSS/OSAC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/2017

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [OSAC](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGIERS: SUMMARY OF RECENT SECURITY INCIDENTS
AIMED AT FOREIGNERS

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Classified By: CDA, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Since September 19, Algerian security and intelligence services have responded to the planned kidnapping of two French citizens in Algiers and the bombing of a joint French/Italian construction company convoy south of Lahkdaria, approximately 60km from Algiers. The bombing of the convoy was preceded by an internet message from Ayman al-Zawahiri in which he called upon Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to rid North Africa of French and Spanish influence. In response to these events, the Algerian government publicly advised all diplomatic personnel to avoid high-risk travel outside of the capital Algiers. End Summary.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

¶2. (SBU) On September 19, two French citizens were repatriated to France after Algerian intelligence services apprised their French counterparts of a possible kidnapping plot against them. The two French nationals were employed by Aeroports de Paris (ADP), a French contractor charged with managing logistics operations at Algiers International Airport. Both French citizens had been in Algiers since the summer of 2006. The French intelligence services believed that kidnapping threat was credible enough to warrant an expeditious repatriation of the French citizens and that more than likely the plot was the work of AQIM.

¶3. (SBU) On September 20, Ayman al-Zawahiri issued an internet based communique on the "al-Ekhass" website specifically calling for the expulsion of French and Spanish nationals from the Maghreb. The communique described the expulsion of French and Spanish as the new mission of AQIM, formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

¶4. (SBU) On September 21 at approximately 0900, a convoy carrying employees of the joint French/Italian construction company Razel was attacked 25 km south of the town of Lahkdaria (60 km south of Algiers) by a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED). Two French citizens and one Italian were injured along with six

Algerians. The driver of the SVBIED was killed. Reports indicated that a vehicle traveling the opposite direction from the convoy blew up as it encountered the line of Razel vehicles and their gendarmerie escort. Information suggests that Razel, which is building a dam in the area, routinely used the same road at the same time and had over time established a pattern of travel through the region.

RESPONSE

15. (SBU) International community response to these events has been varied. The British embassy updated its travel warning and the French have recommended that their citizens reassess the risks of travel to Algeria. Some members of the international business community, including the French company Michelin, have elected to repatriate dependent family members. Razel indicated publicly that it would not be deterred by the bombing, and ADP has similarly declined to suspend its operations at the airport. Embassy Algiers has responded to these events by reminding its staff of their responsibility to remain vigilant, keep a low profile and to exercise caution when moving about the city. Post has drafted a warden message outlining these recent events that will be distributed to the American community once approved by the Department.

16. (C) COMMENT: In Algeria, the month of Ramadan has historically been a busy time for terrorist activity. The two most recent events, the planned kidnapping of the French nationals and the bombing of the French/Italian construction company convoy, fit this pattern. Additionally, the two events support the latest Al-Qaeda communique calling for the expulsion of French and Spanish influence from the region. The details surrounding the

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convoy attack suggest that AQIM tactics have changed again, however, specifically through the use of counterflow-traffic suicide attacks. This concept is new and deviates from the typical roadside bomb or the SVBIEDs aimed at stationary targets that we have seen since the April 11 attacks in Algiers. The specific threat of kidnapping of Westerners in Algiers is also new for AQIM. In recent years, kidnappings have generally taken place in the eastern part of the country and targeted Algerians who either had the means to pay ransom or represented some sort of political significance. For their part, the Algerian security services appear to be too slow to adapt to AQIM's emerging tactics.
DAUGHTON